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SUBJECT: CHINESE VIEWS ON DARFUR

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: At a July 26-27 conference on the Darfur hosted by the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs-affiliated China Institute of International Studies (CIIS), Chinese Government officials and scholars attributed the conflict in Darfur to poverty, resource scarcity, effects of global warming and mistrust among the parties involved. Government officials and scholars encouraged Western nations to exert influence over rebel groups to restart the political process and blamed Western media for "sensationalism and bias" in its reporting on the Darfur. Chinese scholars dismissed criticism of China's involvement in Sudan as "unfair and nonsensical" and insisted that both the Chinese and Sudanese Governments have taken positive steps to address the Darfur conflict. Noting that "no quick fix" exists for Darfur, scholars suggested parties in the conflict cooperate to establish a minimal level of governance in areas where none exists and that the international community bolster trust in Darfur by assuring the Government of Sudan that regime change or independence for Darfur are not goals of the international community. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) The China Institute of International Studies (CIIS), a Ministry of Foreign Affairs-affiliated think tank, hosted the "International Conference on Darfur: Peace and Development" in Beijing June 26-27. Attendees included a wide range of Chinese academics and government officials, as well as Western and African government officials and civil society leaders. The United States was represented by Department of State Africa Bureau Sudan Programs Group Acting Office Director Jason Small.

Darfur's Root Cause is Poverty  
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¶3. (SBU) Darfur is in essence a development problem, with the root causes being poverty and a scarcity of natural resources, Assistant Foreign Minister Zhai Jun said in his opening remarks. The idea of poverty and resource scarcity was further explored by Zhejiang Normal University Professor Jiang Hengkun, who said that since 2002, ethnic tensions have been compounded by conflicts between settled agriculturalists and ethnic nomads over arable land for use as either farmland or pasture. The situation has worsened as arable land has disappeared due to both natural and manmade factors, including drought and over-farming. A subsequent boom in population caused by higher birth rates and increased immigration has also worsened the situation. Given these factors, the conflict in Darfur is at its root an issue of

development and can be solved through aid and technology transfers to the people of Darfur, Jiang said. AFM Zhai Jun also stressed the importance of economic development to finding a durable solution in Darfur, noting that development is contingent upon the international community taking steps to improve the humanitarian and security situation in Darfur.

#### Promotion of the Political Process

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¶4. (SBU) Western nations should concentrate on restoring the political process and promoting dialogue on the basis of mutual equality while respecting Sudanese territorial integrity, Shanghai Institute for International Studies (SIIS) West Asian and African Studies Professor Zhang Zhongxiang said. If no additional pressure is brought to bear on the rebels, the situation may drag on indefinitely, as has happened between Palestine and Israel, he added. He suggested that the international community "stop complaining and blaming others and take responsibility for humanitarian aid and development," noting the particular need for schools and hospitals in Darfur. Ministry of State Security-affiliated China Institutes for Contemporary International Studies (CICIR) African Studies Department Director Xu Weizhong said that the West has clear channels of communication with the rebels and should be pressuring them to join in political negotiations. A solution should also be reached on power- and wealth-sharing rights among the various regions of Sudan, he said. He noted that the people of Darfur are not interested in the theories of international relations that Western nations debate, but are waiting to be told what to do to fix the problems in Darfur. In contrast, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) Institute of West Asian and African Studies Dr. Yang Baorong said that the Western habit of telling other nations what to do "is annoying," and, instead of issuing instructions, the West should lead by example, providing help and fostering dialogue

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between the relevant parties.

#### Media Sensationalism

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¶5. (SBU) The Western media's reporting from Darfur has been biased and sensationalized, often exaggerating the death toll or claiming falsely that "ethnic cleansing" is underway, CIIS Department for Developing Countries Studies Director Li Guofu said. This sort of sensationalism, coupled with "an incomprehensible attempt" to link Darfur to China because of energy cooperation with Sudan has led the world to distrust the Western media and has not been helpful to solving the problem, he said. CIIS African Research Center Executive Director Wang Hongyi added that the situation in Darfur is "not as bad as you might believe," but the West maintains an extremely hostile attitude toward the Sudanese Government largely because of biased Western reporting. Western media and society have emboldened and encouraged the rebels by criticizing the Sudanese Government, he added. He noted that the Western media has taken a hostile approach and actively sought to sour international opinion of the Sudanese Government, particularly since it began exporting oil in ¶1996. SIIS' Zhang noted that the problems in Darfur have been ongoing for years, but a slew of publicity has turned the region into an unwarranted "hot issue" in international relations, despite the fact that the issues in Darfur are not unique in Africa. Attempts to link China to the problems in Darfur have also helped to keep the issue "hot" and are part of the problem. What is needed to solve the Darfur issue is a comprehensive solution, Zhang said.

#### Distrust: Now We're Hitting the Nail on the Head

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¶6. (SBU) Another major factor in the Darfur conflict is a fundamental lack of trust from nearly all parties involved,

CIIS' Li said. The Sudanese Government fears that the U.S. Government seeks regime change in Sudan and that the United States is unfairly biased in favor of rebel groups, while the United States and other members of the international community feel that the Sudanese Government is insincere and funds Arab militia groups. In order to overcome this distrust, the international community must guarantee respect for the concerns of the Sudanese Government, he said. The West should take a fair and objective role, not politicize technical delays, and should pressure rebel groups to stop hostile activity, thus playing a positive role and building trust. CICIR's Xu added that some Western NGOs operating in Darfur are fueling mistrust, as they "are extremely conservative," hate the Bashir Government and are agitating for regime change. As such, it is important to ensure that American NGOs are not making excessive demands, not supporting regime change and are playing a positive role in the region rather than acting as a destabilizing factor, he said. Confidence-building measures will go a long way toward solving the problems in Darfur, he suggested, noting that Western nations are unlikely to gain the trust of the Sudanese people without a guarantee that the West is not seeking Darfur independence or regime change.

#### Sanctions Ineffective

17. (SBU) Increased pressure on the Sudanese Government, such as by the use or threat of sanctions, is not productive, will further complicate the situation in Darfur and ultimately will not lead to a solution, AFM Zhai Jun said. Shanghai Normal University (SNU) Professor Shu Yunguo agreed, saying that the complexity of religious and historical factors in Darfur, combined with modern economic conditions and refugee issues, means that sanctions are unlikely to solve any problems in Sudan and will likely complicate the situation and cause problems there to worsen. Peking University School of International Studies Professor Li Anshan noted that the Darfur conflict is a tragedy, but it is not genocide, adding that the threat of sanctions on the basis of "genocide" only helps to build mistrust. He noted that neither the UN nor any nation except the United States refers to the Darfur conflict as genocide, and that even former U.S. President Jimmy Carter said explicitly that it fails to meet the legal definition of genocide. Noting that a similar conflict in Congo has received almost no attention and no such labels, Professor Li reiterated that the threat of sanctions is not useful and that the only way to restart the political process is by building trust.

Respect Sovereignty, Territorial Integrity

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18. (SBU) The international community must continue to respect Sudan's sovereignty and territorial integrity and seek to solve the Darfur crisis through dialogue on an equal footing, AFM Zhai Jun said. CIIS' Wang agreed, saying that the problems in Darfur must be solved at the national, rather than international level. In an effort to harm Sino-Sudanese relations, Western nations have created conflicts and sought to destabilize the region, such as when France increased its military presence in Chad, he said. If the West continues to interfere in Sudan in a negative way, it will lead to chaos in Darfur that may affect the entire region and imperil Sudan's oil production, which he claimed accounts for 16 percent of the world's supply and thus plays a major role in global oil price stability. (Note: Sudan's annual oil production ranks 32nd in the world, according to the CIA World Fact Book, accounting for a much smaller fraction of total global production.)

Darfur: Stumbling blocks remain

¶9. (SBU) Despite China's best efforts, some stumbling blocks still exist in Darfur, AFM Zhai Jun said. These include the delayed deployment of UN-African Union hybrid peacekeeping force UNAMID due to logistics and equipment issues, the breakdown of the political process due to the lack of participation of some rebel groups, and the continued deterioration of the security situation, including exchanges of weapons fire between government troops and rebel forces, he said. Expounding on UNAMID's deployment in a meeting on the margins of the conference, Chinese Special Envoy for Darfur Liu Guijin said that China, like the United States, is not satisfied with the speed of UNAMID deployment. The reasons for the delay are "quite complex" and include logistics issues as well as stumbling blocks caused both by the Government of Sudan and by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). For almost half a year China has asked to deploy the remainder of its troops, but the UN has not been ready for them. The UN and Western nations must be practical and patient in waiting for these logistics issues to be overcome, Liu said. He concluded that China does not want a dispute with the United States over Darfur, particularly given how much the two nations have in common in their mutual quest for a permanent long-term solution to the problems there. CICIR's Xu urged Western nations to support the logistics of UNAMID deployment, particularly by providing helicopters. He expressed skepticism that not enough helicopters are available, saying "I just don't believe" that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are utilizing all the helicopters requested for Darfur.

China Has Taken Positive Steps . . .

¶10. (SBU) Positive steps China has taken to support the people of Darfur include actively enhancing communication between all parties involved, working toward a political solution to the crisis, supporting UNAMID by contributing troops and engineers, supporting a dual-track approach to the Darfur issue and promoting a resumption of dialogue, and taking steps to improve the on-the-ground humanitarian situation in Darfur through infrastructure development and the provision of educational and material aid, AFM Zhai Jun said. In the future, China plans to help reach the goal of peace and stability in Darfur by continuing to give full play to the trilateral mechanism, firmly promoting peacekeeping in a balanced way, and promoting the political process by urging rebel groups to align their positions to provide a unified front for interaction with the Sudanese Government, he said. China will also continue to strive toward an improved humanitarian and security situation in Darfur so as to allow the people of Darfur to rebuild their homeland.

. . . So Stop Blaming China for Darfur

¶11. (SBU) The West should better understand the positive role that China has played in Sudan and stop blaming it for problems there, CIIS' Wang said. Blaming China for problems in Sudan is as nonsensical as blaming China for rising global food prices, he added. SNU's Shu agreed, saying that in a globalizing world, it is unfair to blame one nation for political problems in another nation just because of trade relations. He noted that other nations with strong economic ties to Sudan are not blamed for the problems in Darfur. Darfur is not in China, and the situation there is ultimately

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part of the internal affairs of Sudan. SIIS' Zhang suggested that rather than pointing fingers at China, the international community should set a timetable for progress in the political process to help drive things forward. CIIS' Li said that attempts to link Darfur to China because of energy cooperation with Sudan are "incomprehensible" and unhelpful in solving the problems there. Peking University's Li acknowledged that much suspicion seems to surround China's oil trade with Sudan, but noted that China engages in energy

cooperation with other nations, such as Australia and Kazakhstan, without drawing any criticism and trade with Sudan should be no different. Responding to charges that China neglects the human rights situation in Darfur, Li noted that "different people have different concepts of human rights." He said some nations criticize the human rights record in China, but still promote trade with China. China has no reason to stop trading with Sudan just because other nations accuse the Sudanese Government of human rights violations.

#### Sudanese Government Has Been Helpful

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¶12. (SBU) The international community should not overlook the efforts of the Sudanese Government, CICIR Institute of Asian and African Studies Director Li Rong said, noting that the Sudanese Government sent a high-level delegation to the Libya conference, while the majority of rebel groups boycotted. The Sudanese Government has been positive and made great strides to solve many domestic problems, she said, and the West should respond with full faith and confidence in the Sudanese Government and avoid interfering in Darfur. SIIS' Zhang agreed, noting that the sincerity of the Sudanese Government is reflected in its acceptance of UNSC Resolution 1769, as well as its continued efforts to hold dialogue with rebel forces. CASS' Yang urged the international community to trust the Sudanese Government to solve the problems in Darfur, both because the Government has made great strides and because the problem falls within the bounds of Sudanese sovereignty and territorial integrity. He added that the international community should "be more tolerant and complain less" about Darfur.

#### The Way Forward: Create Minimal Governance

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¶13. (SBU) The security situation must be improved so that some semblance of governance can be established on the ground, as currently not even a minimal level of governance exists in Darfur, CICIR's Xu said. There is disagreement between the rebels and the Sudanese Government as to who should govern, and neither the UN nor the AU have the ability or mandate to govern in Darfur, he said. All parties involved in the conflict should "join forces" in the name of creating minimal governance as a first step toward solving the problem. He noted that the involvement of the Sudanese Government in Darfur is inevitable, as Darfur is part of Sudanese territory. Xu suggested that the international community and the Sudanese Government should work together to stop "spoilers" from sabotaging the peace process in Darfur. He noted that a quick fix or "shock therapy" solution to the problems in Darfur will not help solve the problem, while a gradual approach that encourages progress is better than threats and ultimatums. Regarding negotiations and the resumption of the political process, Xu said that many of the demands of the international community are unreasonable and often the scope of the negotiations is too large. The international community should pick only the most important issues in Darfur and bring them to the negotiating table, and it should recognize that there is no perfect solution, but rather only relatively good solutions to the complex problems in Darfur.

RANDT